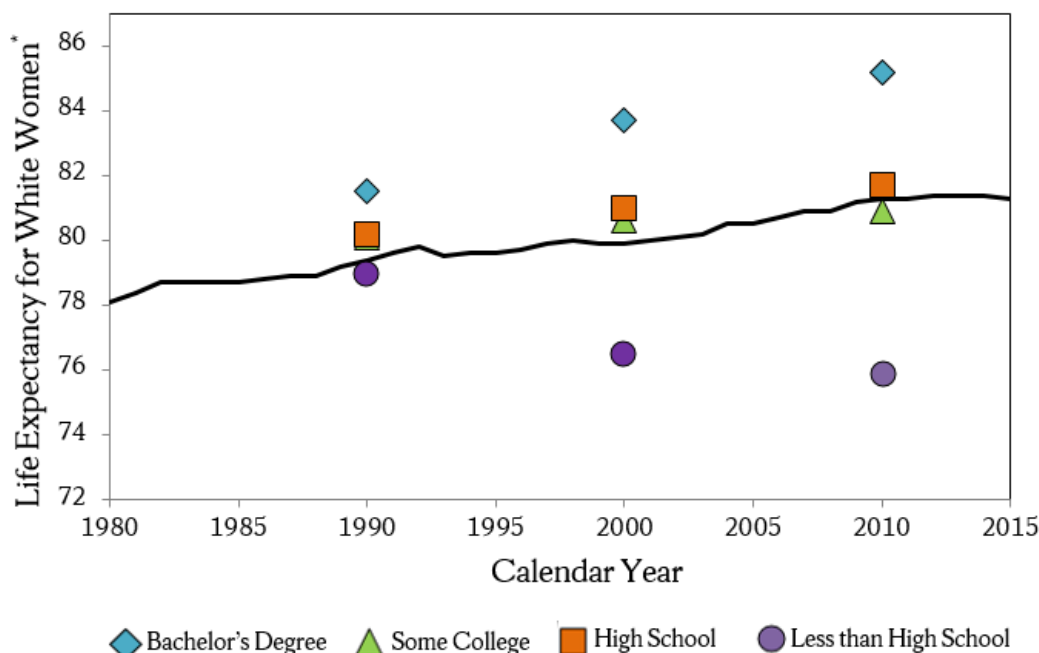


Life Expectancy is Increasingly Tied to Our Education Level

Jennifer Karas Montez

In the U.S., an individual's education level is one of the strongest predictors of how long they will live. Since the mid-1980s, it has become an increasingly strong predictor. This is true for women and men and for different race and ethnic groups. The figure below illustrates this trend for white women. The black line shows the gradual increase in white women's life expectancy from 1980 through 2016. Trends in life expectancy for white women with a high school credential (green triangles) and some college but no degree (orange squares) are similar to the national average for all white women. However, life expectancy for white women with a Bachelor's degree or higher (blue diamonds) increased dramatically. Life expectancy for white women without a high school credential (purple circles) declined. By 2010, white women with a Bachelor's degree or higher could expect to live nearly a decade (9.3 years) longer than their peers without a high school credential.



*Life expectancy in the figure is contingent on surviving to age 25. Data on women's life expectancy come from the Human Mortality Database (www.mortality.org). Data on women's life expectancy by education level comes from Isaac Sasson, 2016, "Trends in life expectancy and lifespan variation by educational attainment: United States, 1990-2010." *Demography* 53: 269-293.

About the Author

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